



BUILDING LEADERS FOR THE FUTURE; AN EXAMPLE OF TALENT MANAGEMENT & SUCCESSION PLANNING IN GLOBAL ORGANISATIONS

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Abstract

One of the most contentious senior leadership decision choices in many organisations has to do with the selection and promotion of staff into mission-critical senior management and leadership roles. It can be fraught with mystery, suspicion, inadequate information, rumours, gossips and character assassinations. However, when talent management and promotion decisions are done transparently with clearly verifiable standards and processes, they enable organisational fairness and produce quality outcomes. This research examines a « building leaders for the future » talent management and succession planning programme of a global organisation. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, the study examines key enablers for successful talent management and succession planning. Our conclusion is that a successfully sustainable talent management and succession planning initiative requires political will by senior leadership, a multi-layered methodology to spot and identify talent across key layers of the organisation as well as a values and behaviors competencies framework that ensures transparency in the processes and outcomes.

Keywords: talent management, succession planning, development center

1. Introduction

Building leaders for the future (*BLF*) is a technical approach to talent management and succession planning in which high-potential and high-performing individuals are carefully selected, nurtured and developed to assume horizontal and vertical roles with more complexity, scope and scale. Every organisation that strives for business and talent sustainability needs to create an environment to invest in staff who demonstrate consistently superior performance and who embody the core values and behaviours of the organisation. Talent management and succession planning require finding, nurturing, developing and positioning highly qualified backups for key mission-critical

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positions. Sain & Koul (2020), Bano *et al.* (2022). Talent management and succession planning involve strategic investment in an employee based on their actual and/or potential for adding value to the organisation. Inadequate allocation of resources that does not target high-potential and high-performing staff can result in unpleasant turnover and low morale. The prediction of a high-performing staff's success probability at each level of an organisation is called a forecast of potential and must be based on prior performance and a projection of how far a staff can go in a defined period under review and what their envisaged level of accountability, problem-solving and technical know-how and ultimate assignment could be. Many organisations fail to establish a resilient talent management and succession planning architecture simply because talent initiatives are incoherent, bereft of verifiable data and insights and are driven by favouritism or vested interests.

This study examines how a reputable global organisation, designed and implemented a talent management and succession planning programme that produced a cadre of high-performing staff who went on to do very senior roles within the organisation in Africa.

2. Hypothesis

- If an organisation's talent management and succession planning programme is designed with a values and behaviors competencies framework, it results in the identification of future leaders who are a fit with the values of the organisation.
- If an organisation's talent management and succession planning programme is designed with a multi-layered methodology, it inherently produces a more expansive talent pool at critical middle layers within the organisational structure that feeds into filling mission-critical leadership roles.

3. Literature Review of Talent Management and Succession Planning

Talent management is based on the concept that 'talent' needs to be identified, developed, and managed differently (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016). This is accomplished by selecting and placing employees based on their potential, which has a direct impact on organizational performance (Luna-Arocas *et al.*, 2020; Mahfoozi *et al.*, 2018). The approach that is commonly used to identify talent systematically is a two-dimensional matrix, the nine-box grid. (Hatun 2010, Jooss *et al.*, 2021).

According to Febrianto (2021), the aim of talent management is:

- 1) finding and preparing talents for key positions as future leaders and positions that support the organization;
- 2) encouraging professionalism of positions, competence, and career clarity of talents;
- 3) realizing objective, systematic, open and timely succession planning;

- 4) ensuring the availability of the right talent, in the right position and at the right time, based on the organization's strategic goals, vision, and mission, while balancing career development and organizational needs.

A talent management system is a crucial element of an organization's human resource management strategy. Its objective is to procure, retain, and nurture the most extraordinary individuals necessary for the organization's sustainability. The primary aim of creating a talent management system is to address the organizational problem of attaining exceptional performance and securing the long-term sustainability of the company (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020; Philips & Edwards, 2008).

It is evident that organizations strive to surpass their rivals and establish a competitive edge that guarantees the long-term sustainability of their (Gomez Trujillo *et al.*, 2024). According to Hasan (2016), talent is an invaluable resource that possesses the potential for development and utilization to yield advantageous outcomes for a business. As stated by Akani (2015), it is practical for any goal-driven organization to ensure that managers are available in the appropriate numbers and locations at all times. This statement implies that every proactive organization, as a matter of strategic concern, should have the necessary human resources to drive its agenda without any vacuum at any level, stratum, or echelon. This demonstrates the significance of succession planning in ensuring an organization's long-term viability. Every organization should not only have a succession plan in place but also train, develop, and manage talent for future positions (Ewers *et al.*, 2017).

Effective firms have invested in continuous leadership talent development and proactive succession planning to meet the developing difficulties of transitory management (Ali & Mehreen, 2019). These companies have to plan for operational succession to ensure the organization's long-term viability, as well as invest in the leadership development of possible successors. Leadership succession planning has forced the establishment of succession planning programs that assure organizational stability at the management, knowledge, or skill, and people levels when current managers exit (Ali & Mehreen, 2019). As a result, succession planning requires a proactive approach to ensure smooth knowledge transfer, continuity toward the desired organizational goals, and the preservation of competitive organizational advantage that would be lost if gaps were developed when leadership leaves.

Furthermore, Bano *et al.* (2022) asserted that organizations could get the right people in the right place at the right time by implementing succession planning mechanisms. Mahfoozi *et al.* (2018) proposed the conceptual view of talent mindset as an implementation strategy for talent management involving the attraction, identification, development, and relationship building for management human capital. According to Mahfoozi *et al.* (2018), a conceptual definition of a talent management strategy indirectly includes leadership succession planning procedures.

A clear succession plan encourages senior managers to become mentors and teachers to their younger counterparts. This purposeful technique of transferring

knowledge and skills, also known as talent retention, considerably contributes to business continuity (Weisblat, 2018).

3.1 Succession Planning

Succession is literally defined as a replacement, and in this case, it usually refers to leadership. Succession planning is the process of appointing potential candidates to leadership/managerial positions. In an organization, an individual cannot take on the role of leader continuously. Therefore, leadership transitions must be managed properly to avoid conflict (Butler & Roche-Tarry, 2002). Moreover, there are cases where a manager has left the organization, and no one wants to fill the vacant position. Succession planning is considered an important part of an organization's human resources because it can be used to fill vacancies in certain leadership positions (Rakhmawanto, 2020), ensure leadership continuity, avoid transition problems, reduce promotion incidents (Kim, 2003), and prepare for unexpected conditions (Butler & Roche-Tarry, 2002). Succession planning is a crucial mechanism for executing strategic plans. An efficient succession plan enhances the talent pool, aligning with the organization's strategic strategy and creating more possibilities for high-potential employees. Additionally, it facilitates the identification of training requirements based on anticipated replacements. (Amusat *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, the implementation of succession planning and talent management has a beneficial impact on the sustainability of an organization. Succession planning guarantees that individuals receive sufficient training and development to assume higher positions of authority, thereby enhancing their skills, expertise, and productivity (Amusat *et al.*, 2022; Ibidunni, 2020). Therefore, future businesses must possess the capability to recognize and cultivate essential skills for leadership roles and positions. Succession planning is a crucial subject in human resource management. Companies require high-quality human resources to fill open positions. Regrettably, some firms lack a prepared succession planning program, which hinders their ability to groom successors in the event of a key vacancy.

When an organisation invests in a “*building leaders for the future*” programme it is without doubt building its leadership pipeline and through that ensuring organisational sustainability. According to Chiaramonte *et al* (2020), sustainability is a comprehensive strategy for managing organizations that aims to create and maximize long-term social, economic, and environmental values. Organizational sustainability is a term that emerged from the concepts of corporate social responsibility and corporate sustainability. It refers to an organization's ability to effectively contribute to sustainable development while providing economic, environmental, and social advantages (Batista & Francisco, 2018; Tur-Porcar *et al.*, 2018). Globalization, evolving customer behavior, and disruptive innovation are among the challenges that organizations must address in order to thrive in the marketplace. Talent management and succession planning initiatives contribute towards organisational sustainability.

Succession planning is a vital aspect of any sustainable business organization. A steady and reliable pipeline of talented professionals ready to step into critical roles is a necessity for organizations across the spectrum. A well-executed and defined succession planning process is intended to give various benefits to the sustainability of a business. For starters, when succession is based on transparent and merit-based criteria, it can be a wonderful motivator for employees who can see a clear path to progress within the firm, which empowers them to work harder and leads to higher job satisfaction (Badawy *et al.*, 2016).

Finally, from the perspective of shareholder-owned companies, having a structured succession plan gives shareholders confidence that experienced people are being groomed to ensure the smooth operation of the business if and when the current leadership passes away (Sain & Koul, 2020).

3.2 Talent Management and Succession Planning

The primary goal of management succession planning in modern corporate organizations is to efficiently meet the future requirements of the firm and flourish within the framework of a learning organization. Succession planning is a proactive approach to managing the skills and competencies of personnel. The process includes selecting people who possess exceptional potential, talent, and competencies that align with future requirements. The organization then offers these personnel training and development opportunities, fostering a diverse group of skilled individuals capable of meeting future demands. Tamunomiebi and Orianzi (2019) contend that including ethical and leadership training is essential when preparing and cultivating successors through talent management strategies.

Talent Management and Training and Development Organizations may successfully promote talent development by strategically allocating resources for learning and skill upgrading and fostering a supportive learning culture (Werner, 2021). The practice of assigning HRM responsibilities to line managers has been thoroughly analyzed in the academic discipline of strategic HRM.

Organizations strive to recruit and retain highly skilled workers to improve operational efficiency and create a productive work environment. Organizations struggle to attract, develop, and retain important talent, which is the main concern in contemporary competitiveness (Cheng *et al.*, 2022; Luna-Arocas & Danvila-del-Valle, 2022; Oladapo, 2014; Sparrow & Makram, 2015; Ullah *et al.*, 2022). The study of talent management and its retention has been analyzed using big data and predictive analysis within the context of the theory of resources and capabilities (Belal *et al.*, 2022). A study by Vaiman *et al.* (2017) has proven a link between managers' participation in effective implementation and their support for talent development, skill upgrades, and career development.

3.3 Talent Management and Organization Sustainability

A talent management system is a crucial element of an organization's human resource management strategy. It is designed to acquire, retain, and develop the most extraordinary individuals necessary for the organization's success. Introducing a talent management system is a complex task for an organization, with the goal of attaining exceptional performance and securing the company's sustainability (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020). In the present business environment, marked by escalating rivalry, multiple challenges, and a widespread feeling of uncertainty, organizations must exhibit adaptation to guarantee their long-term sustainability. This requires the provision of adequate organizational resources, as underlined by Pucciarelli and Kaplan (2016). Effective human resource management is vital for firms, as human resources are their key assets (Elsharnouby & Elbanna, 2021). Organizations that have dependable human resources are more inclined to attain high levels of performance. Kuye *et al.* (2020) argue that incorporating sustainability into an organization's core is essential for improving its ability to survive and prosper. We also extend that argument to suggest that investing in talent management facilitates organisational sustainability.

4. Methodology

This research is a qualitative and quantitative study with a single case design using an in-depth interview and questionnaire approach and was conducted in October-November 2020 in Dakar, Senegal.

4.1 Sampling and Data Processing

We used a purposive sampling technique. These were the respondents.

- Interviews with all 8 country office HR Business Partners in the Africa region,
- Interviews with 2 HQ Learning and Development centre of expertise staff,
- Interviews with 20 staff selected as leaders for the future talent management programme,
- Interviews with 15 line managers of staff selected for the talent management programme,
- Interviews with 6 country directors whose staff were selected as leaders for the future program. The directors were interviewed before and after the talent management programme
- Interviews with 8 members of the regional senior leadership executive teams.

Convenience sampling was used to select the respondents for the study. This procedure was used to ensure that only respondents who were available and willing to participate in the study were engaged. This approach was used to ensure that the participation would lead to the answering of questionnaires in a truthful and less stressful manner.

Out of 59 questionnaires administered to all respondents, employees, 57 valid questionnaires (representing 57% male and 43% female) were returned and used for the

analysis. In addition, five focus group discussions involving structured interview questions were conducted to provide additional insights into the questionnaire data.

Table 1 below provides information on the distribution of respondents from the HQ, country offices and regional offices.

4.2 Respondents Distribution

Name of Office	Frequency or respondents	Percentage
HQ	2	3.50877193
Country Office 1	5	8.771929825
Country Office 2	7	12.28070175
Country Office 3	8	14.03508772
Country Office 4	5	8.771929825
Country Office 5	7	12.28070175
Country Office 6	4	7.01754386
Country Office 7	8	14.03508772
Country Office 8	4	7.01754386
Regional Office	7	12.28070175
	57	100

4.3 Measures

The rating scale ranged from 1= “not at all” 2= “once in a while”, 3= “sometimes”, 4= “fairly often”, and 5= “frequently, if not always”.

A sample of representative items are “My manager supports my career development”. “My manager makes clear what promotion pathways are available when consistent performance objectives are achieved”, “the development center is a transparent approach to succession planning”, “I trust the selection committee of the development center”, “there is a culture of talent management in this organisation”

4.4 Secondary Data

We also reviewed employee engagement survey results for the preceding three years, i.e., 2018, 2019, and 2020. We also examined secondary materials, including annual reports, internal controls on HR, resource acquisition and management documents, the governing board’s HR committee papers on succession planning, etc.

4.5 Summary Analysis

The data was analyzed in stages: collection of raw data, data reduction, data interpretation, and drafting of conclusions. Triangulation was used to ensure the validity of the research data by comparing interview and questionnaire data with documentation studies.

4.6 Background of Case Study Organisation

The company is headquartered in the United Kingdom and has been in existence for over fifty years now. It focuses on partnering with community-based organizations to

build their capacities in governance, citizen voice and action and social mobilization. It also has direct programmes implementation in water and sanitation, child protection, youth and agri-preneurship with a focus on creating, managing, and scaling innovative, profitable agribusinesses across the food value chain. The organisation operates the community-managed project approach as its business model and has an annual budget of eighty million dollars and operates in twenty-five countries across the world. It raises funds in Europe. It has regional centers of expertise in each of the four regions of Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America who provide oversight for sixteen country offices across the world. It has a very diverse labour force across all levels of the organisation.

Investing in “*leaders for the future*” was seen as central in the organization’s strategic priorities, which was articulated in the 3 Flows (flow of people, performance, promotion) *for-4 Rs* (the rights to Education, Protection, Health and Household Economic Security) *4Rs*. Quality People is one of the 3Fs; and senior leadership clarified a clear mandate to ensure all offices have a cadre of high-calibre staff to deliver quality programming.

The organization did a review of its pool of country directors and realized 60% were Caucasians who would be due for retirement in the next 5 years. Only 20% of the country directors were female. Across other layers of the organization there had been challenges to attract high-calibre staff. A few examples to emphasize the scope and magnitude of the problem. In 3 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, it took nearly 9 months to identify and recruit a qualified Business Development Director whose role required a combination of IT, operations and risk management competencies. The Business Development Director role was seen as a feeder ground for a regional director of operations or a global director of operations role. In 6 countries in East Africa, it took nearly 10 months to identify and recruit the Chief of Party roles for mega-grants of \$15-25 million dollars. In the Middle East and Asia regions, the Director of Knowledge Management roles, which cover programme design, execution, monitoring, evaluation, and learning has been difficult to recruit. Three Knowledge management directors who were recruited between April 2019 and November 2020 resigned their posts within a maximum of six months of employment.

The absence of high-calibre staff implied a capacity gap, which in turn hampered countries’ performance, especially in a context of rapid grants growth in relatively fragile operating contexts. Typically, large grant donors will be looking for a Chief of Party who has a successful track record in managing large and complex projects. These examples of critical labour shortages compromise program quality and result in an inability to deliver quality programs, to spend funds, to account for the funds, as well as poor choice of partners. Senior leadership acknowledge that this situation results in low quality of project design and subsequent loss of confidence in the organization’s ability to support development plans, increasing the workload of staff, and a subsequent high turnover rate.

A summary report from an HR Consultant confirmed that if nothing was done to address these issues, the main risks for the organization will include:

- Being no longer eligible for funding from donors
- Ceasing to be a partner of choice for major donors and funding partners.
- Losing credibility within the development and charity community, and potentially can lose other forms of private support (e.g. sponsors and other private donors).
- Ceasing to be an employer of choice in its labour market.

Following data from two cycles of staff opinion surveys, which highlighted low scores on how the organisation was promoting staff career development initiatives, senior leadership decided to take corrective action to address the gaps. The BLF talent management programme was in line with one of the three strategic priorities of the Regional Director, which included leadership and accountability, impact and sustainability. The BLF was an opportunity to resource hard-to-fill mission-critical leadership roles, especially for fragile humanitarian contexts.

4.7 Design-Talent Management & Succession Planning Programme

The BLF aimed at establishing a transparent, consistent and strategic talent management and succession planning approach that proactively helped the organisation to develop its bench strength, given its evolving business landscape, to support the realization of its regional strategy to reinforce leadership and organizational sustainability

Within the framework of the organisation's strategic priorities (3Fs and 4Rs), they anticipated:

- 1) Expansion of the regional programmes,
- 2) Acquisition of grants, which will open up project management roles and responsibilities,
- 3) Change management and organisational turnaround initiatives/interventions in the country offices, regional hub, and regional office,
- 4) Retirements, end of expatriate contracts,
- 5) Emergency and interim leaders, etc.
- 6) Increased and sustained relief and advocacy interventions,
- 7) A business to ensure organizational sustainability by having at least 67% of all senior directorial roles hired from within its internal top performers by the next 3 business and financial years.

4.8 Definition of Building Leaders for the Future Talent Management Programme

The building leaders for the future (BLF) talent management programme was conceptualised as an exciting blend of learning and development methods in line with the organisation's learning & development strategy, its corporate core values and behaviors framework and contemporary transformational and strategic leadership knowledge and skills requirements. The program was benchmarked against the requirements for a senior leadership team director role, i.e. Hay Grade 17 & 18. The programme targeted staff who successfully passed a development centre and showed

potential & performance to assume broader and more complex higher leadership roles. The programmes were implemented in two financial business years.

4.9 Defining High Potential

In the BLF framework, potential indicates whether someone *will be able* to succeed in a bigger role in the future. It was defined as a person's *ability to grow and to handle responsibilities of greater scale and scope*. Greater scale means a job in the same area but with a larger *budget, staff, etc.*, and greater scope means a job involving activities of substantially more *breadth and complexity*.

The term "*leaders of the future*" described high-performing and high-potential staff with the following profile:

- Staff with consistent performance and demonstrated potential to do work of greater complexity, scope, scale, budget and size
- Staff with expertise to ensure program quality and effectiveness and position the organization as a key player at the grassroots, country, regional and global levels
- Staff who were results-oriented, but flexible and adaptable
- Staff who demonstrate commitment to organizational vision, mission and values

This definition reflected a comprehensive explanation of the term "*leaders for the future*", which looks at the people, their expertise/skills and values, regardless of the source of funding, whether restricted or unrestricted funding. The focus of the leaders of the future programme was to identify some of the organization's current staff, as they know the organizational culture, have expertise in their field of work and have acquired institutional experience.

In addition, BLF design aimed to identify the organisation's top talent, who were currently in Hay grades 15/16 and who had the potential to grow into full senior leadership director roles across the region within the next 2-3 years, and who can be given a structured & intentional learning and development program with targeted opportunities for learning & development.

4.10 Process

Stage 1

- Country Directors completed formal nomination forms for qualifying staff in their country offices with justifications using an approved global diversity talent management template as a reference point. Country Directors had to submit the forms to the Regional HR Director within a set deadline.
- A talent forum was convened by the Regional HR Director and, under the leadership of the Regional Director, reviewed all applications and approved the final 20 who were then invited to a development centre
- All 20 applicants were required to complete pre-development center assignments for review by the Regional HR and Global Talent Management team, and also participate in a briefing of the program by the Regional HR Director.

- At the end of the 3-day development centre, the Regional HR Director wrote formally to successful participants and provided guidance to employees and their line managers on their obligations, after which a learning & development contract will be signed by both parties.
- Unsuccessful candidates were provided with useful feedback for their personal development.

Stage 2

The Development Centre has been designed to focus on the assessment and development of the following four critical capabilities:

- **Strategic Thinking/Problem Solving with a Focus on Innovation**

Key indicators: The participant quickly understands a situation or an issue by breaking it into its component parts and establishing relationships, correlations and causalities. He/she is able to use a variety of techniques to undertake complex analysis and demonstrates effective understanding and use of appropriate data. Creative and paradigm-shifting solutions/thought leadership is generated after consideration of the merits and risks associated with various alternatives.

- **Stress Management (Self-control / Stamina / Resilience)**

Key indicators: The ability to keep one's emotions under control and restrain negative action when provoked, when faced with hostility or opposition from others and the ability to maintain stamina under continuing stress. The participant restrains emotional impulses, responds calmly, keeps functioning or responds constructively despite stress, applies several techniques or plans activities ahead of time to manage emotions and calms others during the peak period of high stress or adversity, showing humanity and capacity to embrace the universal values of dignity, equity, and compassion

- **People Leadership**

Key indicators: The effective and consistent management of others through, for example, performance planning, appraisal and measurement; appropriate motivation, reward and recognition; the provision of timely feedback, coaching and mentoring; talent management and succession planning; managing upwards; managing virtual teams; managing change; managing within the matrix; working with diversity; appropriate and consistent employee relations including staff counselling, employee representation, grievance and disciplinary processes and the appropriate use of employment contracts. In addition, evidence of deriving insights, empathy, having resolve, and seeking understanding

- **Conflict Management**

Key indicators: The ability to lead teams with emotional intelligence, manage meetings effectively, persuade and influence others, manage diversity, speak and represent the

organisation effectively in public, demonstrate assertiveness when appropriate, identify and manage one's "difficult" person, negotiate for results, mediate and deliver win/win solutions in conflict situations.

The development center (DC) methodology is summarised as follows:

Table 1: Design of Development Center

Capabilities	Pre-DC Preparation (Required of Participants)	DC Activity	Activity Output & Assessment Opportunity	Feedback Process	Decisions to be taken
Strategic thinking	Circa 90 minutes reading.	Observed 5 person group's strategic thinking challenge.	Presentation of the group's outcomes and group process evaluation.	Immediate (at presentation) from observers and accumulated.	The Strategic Thinking challenge is focused on the Regional 3F-4Rs strategy
Stress management	None required	Simulated coaching task with preparatory and interview phases.	Participant's notes and recorded interview with coach supervisor.	Accumulated feedback	
People leadership	None required	Workshop focused on delegation, motivating people, performance feedback and effective coaching	Delegation: Observed group discussion . Motivating people: Role-play exercise . Performance feedback: An observed group discussion , a group exercise and a role play activity .	Accumulated feedback	Additional focus on leading diverse and inclusive teams and having courageous conversations to be delivered during post-DC webinars
Conflict management	On-line completion of a 30 minute conflict mode assessment.	Group activities.	Group activities .	Accumulated feedback (see below).	The Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode assessment, central to this part of the programme, would be made available online for completion before the Development Centre or could be completed by participants and self-scored at the Development Centre

4.11 Accumulated Data & Insights

The BLF is dependent on data and insights demonstrated during the DC. This means that the Development Centre observers would typically record their feedback and combine it into a single, per participant, set of feedback which was provided at the end of the Development Centre and which would then form the basis for the participant's development plan. The observer team were trained to do this before the Development Centre.

Successful candidates of the DC were enrolled on the BLF study program and were required to complete the 4 study units with time allocated for application of skills & knowledge to the work environment. It was estimated that participants will need to commit at least 50 hours to complete the 4 units, given an average of 4 hours of study a week. For all modules, participants had to attend an online lecture, complete a paper and also actively engaged on-line discussions that were moderated by qualified subject matter experts who were drawn from internal and external sources.

Additional resources for stage 2 included:

- Structured feedback from line managers, direct reports and peers before and after the TMP,
- World-class content from very reputable academic and certified vocational institutions,
- Case studies and other collaborative group activities to help participants to relate the online content to work in the organisation, and share the experiences with other participants,
- Online support from the regional Talent Management Advisor & Global learning & Development Advisors
- Live online events on key management topics, including presentations from specialists in leadership, coaching, communications and finance, etc.
- Individual assignments to assist in the application of new skills
- Periodic coaching from line managers.

4.12 Programme Completion

A participant was deemed to have successfully completed the BLF if they met the following requirements:

- 1) Successful participation at the development centre,
- 2) Completion of core business modules,
- 3) Active participation in group assignments,
- 4) Satisfactory progress in applying new management behavior and skills to the job as evidenced in performance appraisals and 360-degree feedback.

Successful participants were provided with a certificate, had to complete a career development plan and were given structured learning & development opportunities as defined by the talent management strategy. Line managers were required to consistently assess how TMP graduates had improved their skills *in setting and achieving objectives; managing performance, giving and receiving feedback; coaching; influencing and*

giving presentations.

Stage 3

Successful candidates were put on a structured L&D plan, and subject to business-relevant opportunities, were assigned to **stretch projects**, i.e. mega grants, relief and emergencies response programmes, special projects, interim roles, etc. In addition, successful candidates were prioritised for secondment opportunities, job rotations and job enrichments. These included roles of bigger scale, bigger scope, line-to-staff or staff-to-line switches, cross moves (handling different sets of activities across departments, functions), project start-ups, turnarounds, change management initiatives and international assignments.

4.13 Leadership of BLF Programme Management

The business owner of the BLF programme was the Regional Director, and the programme manager was the HR Director, with technical support and quality assurance from Learning & Development centers of expertise colleagues at the global head office. The programme facilitator was the regional Talent Management Advisor. Resource persons were also invited from inside and outside the organisation to make presentations on relevant topics.

A review board was also established. This was a selected group of senior staff and subject matter experts whose role was to independently review each participant's contributions to ensure participants met the strict criteria of the program requirements. In terms of financial support and sustainability, the regional office made provision for BLFT costs. A central budget was put together to manage all costs, including conference facilities, meals during the development centre, learning materials and other related resources necessary to ensure smooth delivery of the program, etc. Country offices provided sponsorship for their staff to cover their travel & accommodation to attend the development centre, and were required to allocate adequate time to participate in online programs

4.14 Outcomes

At the end of the two-year programme these were the outcomes:

- Ten staff, i.e. 50% of the cohort, were promoted to senior-level roles.
- Five staff, i.e. 25% were appointed to interim relief and humanitarian response management roles.
- Five staff, i.e. 25% were provided with secondment opportunities to work in other country offices to support specific turnaround initiatives across the region.
- Three of the participants were identified as potential replacers for three senior director roles that were coming up in eighteen months' time and were subsequently selected for those roles after due process.

- Two of the participants were appointed to lead an initiative on “greenfields” which were potential new countries where the organisation was intending to begin operations across the region.
- All twenty participants were provided with internal and external coaches. One of the participants resigned after one year of the program to lead a partner organisation.
- All successful candidates were put on a structured L&D plan and subject to business-relevant opportunities, which were assigned to **stretch projects**, i.e. mega grants, relief and emergencies response programmes, special projects, interim roles, etc.
- As a rule, successful candidates were prioritised for secondment opportunities, job rotations and job enrichments.
- Overall, 75% of the participants were appointed to roles of bigger scale, bigger scope, line-to-staff or staff-to-line switches, cross moves (handling a different set of activities across departments, functions), project start-ups, turnarounds, change management initiatives and international assignments.
- The current regional director for the organisation’s East and Southern Africa programme, as well as 5 country directors in West & Central Africa, were participants of the BLF initiative

Overall, the outcomes of the BLF initiative facilitated senior leadership decisions to fill mission-critical roles within the organisation, and there is consensus to run the next cycle of the BLF once the organisation’s 2030-2035 strategic priorities are approved by the board.

4.15 Model for Talent Management and Succession Planning

Based on the case study, we propose a change management model for talent management and succession planning in a global organisation. We suggest three main enablers, namely political will, multi-layered technical approach and values and behaviors competencies, processes and outcomes.

4.16 Political Will

A talent management and succession planning initiative requires senior leadership support and political will. The senior-most leader, i.e., CEO, has to own the talent management and succession planning change management initiative and be the accountability champion to drive leadership intent across every layer of the organisation. There have to be checks and balances by senior leadership to ensure the intent behind the initiative is not derailed by favouritism. An important control tool is to establish a review board of critical leadership stakeholders who will ensure the integrity and credibility of the process and outcome. Political will by senior leadership opens doors for financial support of mission-critical talent management and succession planning initiatives. Political will enables senior leadership engagement on decision choices around re-purposing funds to support talent management and succession

planning initiatives. Political will by senior leadership facilitates the building of the business case to design and implement a talent management and succession planning initiative. Political will by senior leadership is a sine qua non for any change management process.

4.17 Multi-layered Technical Approach

A talent management and succession planning initiative requires careful planning supported by transparent processes that enable the organisation to target high-performing and high-potential staff across mission-critical middle management layers. A well-defined definition of the standards required to be enrolled on a building a leaders for the future initiative must be comprehensive in terms of the criteria and the actual design of the tools to generate data and insights to select qualifying staff. A multi-layered approach also requires a very rigorous development centre methodology that assesses the core competencies required to be successful. A multi-layered approach means data and insights to generate the business case are aligned with the change readiness and consensus alignment of senior leadership across the organisation, from middle level to senior level. This ensures uniformity of intent and outcome across the organisation. This also helps to manage expectations of both successful and unsuccessful candidates who participate in the programme. A multi-layered technical approach deepens the talent pool and enables key stakeholder engagement, communication, feedback, and overall implementation and evaluation.

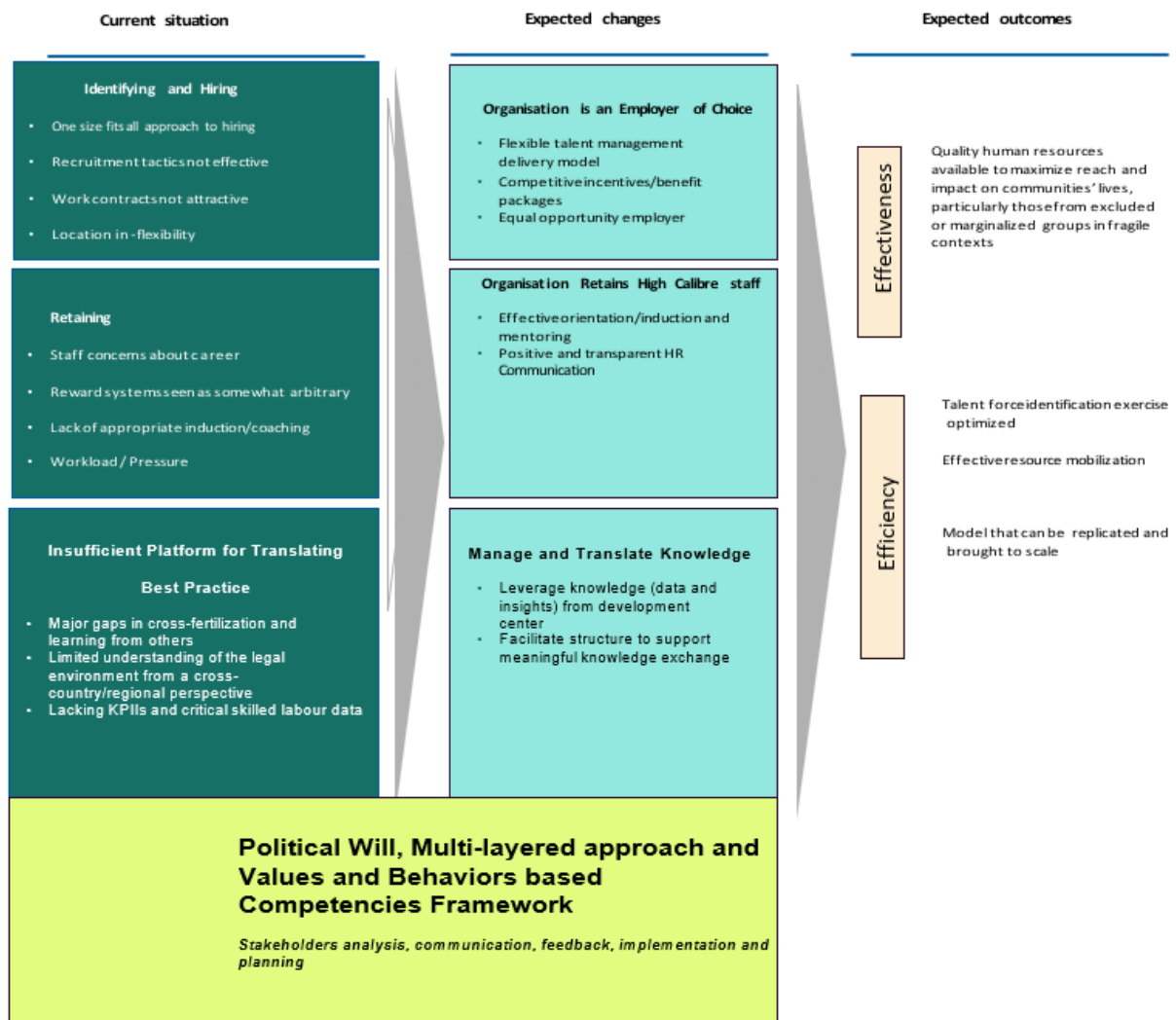
4.18 Values and Behaviors Competencies Processes & Outcome

A talent management and succession planning initiative must be driven by a clear making scheme of what success looks like. The marking scheme for a talent management and succession planning initiative is an organisation's values and behaviors competencies framework, which defines the mission-critical competencies that are expected of a future leader who is demonstrating both hard and soft skills in alignment with the values, culture, history and DNA of the organisation. A values and behaviors competencies approach helps to define the current skilled labour shortages and also project the expected future skilled labour readiness standard. This helps to frame the talent management process as a change management process and guide stakeholder engagement on core values and behavioral competencies that must be established to transition from the current skilled labour shortages to a sustainable skilled labour availability and change impact readiness to deliver the strategic priorities of the organisation.

In sum, the foundation for a talent management and succession planning programme is dependent on stakeholder engagement, transparent communication, adequate planning and rigorous data and insights-driven methodologies. Our study shows that a foundation is built by a senior leadership team that shows political will to invest in leaders for the future, that political will enables a transparent multi-layered methodology to spot and identify high potential and high performing staff, and that

multi-layered approach requires a well-defined values and behaviors competencies framework. The combination of the three factors helps to make the case for change, design and finance the technical approach, as well as ensure gains from the talent management and succession planning change processes and outcomes are sustained over time.

A Leaders for the Future Talent Management Model Change Readiness Frame



5. Conclusion

When leaders make decisions to promote high-performing staff as a response to challenges in their labour markets and operational environment, they attract extra scrutiny. Arbitrary promotions or promotion processes that lack transparency can be characterised by mystery, suspicion, rumours, gossips and character assassinations. This study examined how a global organisation designed and implemented its leadership for the future talent management and succession planning programme. Our conclusion is that when talent management and promotion decisions are done transparently with clearly verifiable standards and processes, they enable

organisational fairness and produce quality outcomes. We also posit that a successfully sustainable talent management and succession planning initiative requires political will by senior leadership, a multi-layered methodology to spot and identify talent across key layers of the organisation, as well as a values and behaviors competencies framework that ensures transparency in the processes and outcomes. Talent management and succession planning are both an art requiring critical thought to align organisational strategy to talent management needs and a science that demands transparently verifiable tools, processes and resources to operationalise the intent into measurable actions to ensure quality and sustainability. Our study's overall conclusion also aligns with the work of Erasmus *et al.* (2017) whose study confirmed that talent management processes must be anchored on a solid methodological implementation to build trust. Talent management and succession planning require a body of knowledge, a set of standards, balanced with leadership discipline and the right organisational culture to ensure positive organisational outcomes that enable impact and strategic advantage.

5.1 Limitations & Implications for Future Research

This study examined a « *building leaders for the future* » talent management and succession planning programme of a global organisation. Even though the study focused on only one global organisation and therefore cannot be generalised across the board, it offers data and insights that can be replicated at scale for further analysis to confirm, modify or rebut the conclusions of this work. Future work will look at comparing talent management and succession planning practices across profit and not-for-profit sectors to examine similarities and differences in approach.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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